

VZCZCXRO6133  
OO RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM  
DE RUEHML #1083 1270832  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 060832Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0613  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE  
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS MANILA 001083

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP, EAP/MLS (COPE), EAP/RSP

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [RP](#) [BM](#)  
SUBJECT: PHILIPPINES RECOGNIZES FLAWS WITH BURMESE  
CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

REF: A. STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT BUSH - MAY 1

- [1](#)B. EXECUTIVE ORDER 13464 (BLOCKING PROPERTY AND PROHIBITING CERTAIN TRANSACTIONS RELATED TO BURMA)
- [1](#)C. SECSTATE 45471 (DEMARCHE REQUEST: BURMA'S FLAWED CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM)
- [1](#)D. MANILA 690 (PHILIPPINES SUPPORTS FAIRNESS IN BURMESE REFERENDUM)
- [1](#)E. MANILA 654 (EAP DAS STRESSES NEED TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON BURMA)

[1](#)1. (SBU) The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is acutely aware of the planned May 10 constitutional referendum in Burma and agrees with our assessment of its flaws. President Arroyo publicly chastised the Burmese junta March 9 for not allowing international observers at the planned referendum (refs D and E). In her statement, Arroyo called the Burmese regime's rejection of outside observers "a sad day for democracy" and made it clear to the international community that she considered it a "strong rebuff of the UN." DFA Acting Assistant Secretary for American Affairs Lourdes Yparraguirre assured Polcouns May 5 that Philippine support for that position had not wavered.

CONTINUING TO TAKE A STRONG STAND  
-----

[1](#)2. (SBU) On May 5 Polcouns raised demarche points (ref C) with Acting Assistant Secretary Yparraguirre, who confirmed that the Burmese constitutional referendum was extremely important to President Arroyo as indicated by her March 9 statement. Yparraguirre was certain the President Arroyo would "continue to take a strong stand on this issue of great concern," and added that she would take the issue to the highest levels of the DFA. Separately, Asian and Pacific Affairs (ASPAC) Southeast Asia Director Maria Elena Algabre-Misrahi said May 2 that "flaws in the process and in the constitution itself" were consistent with the critique detailed in the demarche request (ref C). According to Algabre-Misrahi, Burmese diplomats, who have always been constrained by their military, are increasingly expressing frustration with their own government in informal meetings with ASEAN counterparts regarding the human rights and economic situation in Burma and how it adversely affects ASEAN.

PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE ORDER AGAINST THE BURMESE REGIME  
-----

[1](#)3. (SBU) Post also highlighted President Bush's April 30 public statement (ref A) and message to Congress regarding Executive Order 13464, which further blocks transactions involving Burmese government assets (ref B). Post shared the text of the Presidential statement with DFA Asian and Pacific Affairs (ASPAC) Executive Director Maria Hellen Barber May 2

and raised demarche points again (ref C). Post also shared the text with ASPAC Assistant Secretary Romeo Manalo and DFA's ASEAN Affairs Officer-in-Charge Angelica Escalona on May 5. DFA officials welcomed the additional documents and indicated they would carefully review them.

Visit Embassy Manila's Classified SIPRNET website:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eap/manila/index.cfm>

You can also access this site through the State Department's  
Classified SIPRNET website:  
<http://www.state.sgov>  
KENNEY